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Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5588th meeting

Wednesday, 13 December 2006, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Al-Nasser	(Qatar)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Martínez Gramuglia
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Shinyo
	Peru	Mr. Orozco
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2006/906)

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06-65731 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2006/906)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Albania, Finland, Serbia and Ukraine, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Joachim Rücker, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Rücker to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/906, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I shall now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker.

Mr. Rücker: First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council for your invitation here today to brief the Council on where we stand in Kosovo. I would also like to welcome the Council's invitation to Prime Minister Çeku to be present here today at this important discussion on Kosovo's future.

Status continues to dominate the agenda of everyone concerned with Kosovo. Of course, after more than seven years of international administration and of local capacity-building and after Kai Eide's finding that the status quo is not tenable, the timelines attached to the process are of particular importance. Anxiety has clearly risen, following the decision to delay the proposal on status until after the Serbian elections on 21 January. Keeping momentum in the status process will thereafter be a key factor in heading off a feeling of uncertainty regarding the way ahead, which would be a potential source of instability.

At the same time, important work on standards continues as a top priority of both the Kosovo Government and of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We sometimes have the impression from our international interlocutors that, with all the focus on the status process, the implementation of standards has been forgotten or pushed aside. That is not at all the case. Standards remain at the core of our daily work, with particular concentration on the 13 priority areas set by the Contact Group earlier this year, most of which have been fulfilled by the Kosovo Provisional Institutions.

The Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Çeku, has continued to demonstrate effective leadership on standards implementation, strengthening central and local government institutions and transitioning governance-building and reform to the longer-term platform of European integration through the European Partnership for Kosovo. The Assembly has passed and I have promulgated key legislation prioritized by the Contact Group, including a law firmly establishing the equal official status of the Albanian and Serbian language throughout Kosovo and laws on religious freedom and cultural heritage,

containing provisions of particular importance to the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Kosovo Government has also undertaken steps to ensure freedom of movement by agreeing to take over the responsibility from UNMIK to operate the freedom of movement bus and train system.

One noteworthy area of progress has been the effort to create the conditions for returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs). This week, the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) will complete a six-month project in the village of Svinjare, near Mitrovica, to repair damage to homes and improve local infrastructure. That has been one of the largest and most high-profile projects undertaken by the KPC, and its successful completion demonstrates the KPC's ability and willingness to serve all the people of Kosovo. Despite the success of the project, the Kosovo Serb IDPs have still not returned to Svinjare. I appeal to Belgrade to encourage them to do so. Nonetheless, the criteria on which the Institutions of Self-Government should be judged are their actions to create the conditions for returns.

Another example: in Babus, another village, the keys to 83 reconstructed houses will be ready to be handed over on 20 December. However, the non-governmental organization implementing the project has raised serious concerns with UNMIK that most of the beneficiaries may not actually return. In short, good efforts will have limited impact if more is not done — particularly by Belgrade — to encourage returns when the conditions for them have been created.

The continuing calls by Belgrade for Kosovo Serbs to boycott Kosovo institutions have undermined work done by both UNMIK and the Institutions of Self-Government to reach out to minority communities and to end their often self-imposed isolation. The Serbian Government has still not withdrawn its directive to Kosovo Serbs to withdraw from the payroll of the Institutions of Self-Government, despite numerous calls to do so by the international community. I appeal to the representative of the Serbian Government to withdraw that directive.

One of the most frequently cited complaints of Belgrade and Kosovo Serbs is inadequate security to allow greater participation in political and social life in Kosovo. However, police statistics actually show a sharp drop in incidents that might be ethnically motivated, and we monitor them very carefully. While there have been serious incidents that attract wide public attention, this overall improvement in the situation merits greater recognition. Also, the Kosovo Police Service has made a concerted effort to improve overall security for minorities, as witnessed by the opening of police substations in minority areas and by active involvement by minority police officers in policing those areas. Moreover, the crime statistics in all reporting categories show that there is no disproportion regarding ethnicity with regard to crime. That said, we cannot be complacent about where we are. We continue to put a high priority on all incidents in which police suspect ethnic or political motives.

UNMIK has also been working intensively to address another important concern: the supply of electricity. The difficulties can be traced back to one core problem. The Kosovo electricity company (KEK), the energy provider in Kosovo, has inherited an infrastructure in a state of disrepair, and it does not have enough funds for repair and investment unless consumers pay for the electricity they use. We have recently had some success in improving the payment culture, but some consumers — including nearly all Kosovo Serbs — still do not pay and have significant debts. However, recent talks have been somewhat encouraging. We are now looking forward to a result where Kosovo Serbs are finally recognizing and paying KEK, which will enable it to upgrade the system for the benefit of all, starting this winter. In that context, it is also very important that Kosovo can effectively import additional amounts of electricity, if and when needed, through the Serbian transmission system.

Overall, much has been achieved this year on standards. But that does not mean that everything has been fulfilled. Continuous efforts are needed, as indicated by the challenges noted in the technical assessment of standards implementation that is before members. Progress on many of the standards also depends on clarity regarding status. We all know that progress in key areas such as returns is limited by the lingering uncertainty about Kosovo's future.

While the status process has clearly been brought a long way forward this year, momentum needs to be kept up and a timely status settlement achieved. The constructive engagement and unity of the Kosovo negotiating team — which includes opposition leaders — have contributed substantially to the progress made in the process so far. It is crucial that all stakeholders in Kosovo remain committed to the

process and continue to support the work of Special Envoy Ahtisaari.

The Contact Group has unambiguously stated that once the status process has begun, it cannot be blocked. Resolving Kosovo's status would benefit the entire Balkan region, including Belgrade. On the other hand, further delay would entail significant political and economic costs for Kosovo, for our neighbours, for the region as a whole and for the international community. Delay would be more than just a loss of time. Delay would raise tensions and play into the hands of extremists on all sides. And delay would not make a solution easier; it would make it much more difficult. No one can have an interest in such an outcome.

Once a status decision is made, UNMIK will need to provide for an orderly and smooth handover to future local and international institutions established under the status settlement. Early and prudent planning is indispensable in order to achieve that, and transition planning has now become one of our key priorities. We need to do as much as possible, without prejudice to the status process, before the formal transition period begins with the adoption of a resolution by the Council.

The transfer of responsibilities from UNMIK to the future local and international authorities will be a highly complex task. Let me mention just some of the elements required.

Kosovo will need a new constitutional arrangement to replace the constitutional framework, which relies on UNMIK. The adoption of a new constitution will naturally be followed by elections. The entire body of legislation promulgated by UNMIK will have to be reviewed and necessary amendments made so that, for example, references to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNMIK are replaced.

The future authorities will have to take over all executive functions for which UNMIK still has operational responsibility. New institutions, which may include new ministries, will also have to be created to perform new responsibilities. A wide variety of other tasks will need to be carried out after the end of UNMIK's mandate, such as the handover of our archives to the future authorities and the production and issuance of new travel documents and identification cards to replace the current UNMIK documents. Those tasks, as well as the implementation of the status settlement, will place substantial strains on the local authorities. The international community must support them in this endeavour.

It is also important that the future International Civilian Office, now being prepared by the European Union and the United States, will be fully operational when status comes. Let me reiterate once again: delay would not make a solution easier; it would make it much more difficult.

The United Nations has accomplished much in Kosovo. We now owe it to Kosovo and to you, the members of the Security Council, to make sure that this final phase of United Nations administration is wrapped up in an orderly and responsible manner. I trust that the Council will help in that endeavour by keeping the momentum in the status process and by seeing it through.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Rücker for his briefing.

I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija.

Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of December. It gives me particular pleasure today to address this body of the world Organization.

Proceeding from a notion that we all share — that the establishment of lasting peace and security is the goal to which all people of goodwill are committed — I would particularly like to emphasize the important role of the Security Council concerning Kosovo and Metohija. Its importance is especially great since many sovereign States view the recent developments in the western Balkans with increasing alarm, owing to certain unrealistic assessments with regard to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija.

Serbia is fully prepared to assume its share of responsibility in the process of successfully resolving of the question of Kosovo and Metohija, on the basis of international law and in line with universally acclaimed democratic values. We are fully confident that the Security Council will make a crucial contribution in the spirit of its previous documents, primarily resolution 1244 (1999) of 10 June 1999, which unambiguously reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country.

It is absolutely clear that only by the systematic, responsible and gradual management of the negotiations on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija will we be able to reach a long-term sustainable solution. Such a solution cannot be achieved in haste and should emerge only through confidence-building, dialogue and negotiations. Otherwise, new complications may arise. Confidence and dialogue are conditions sine qua non for any coexistence. Nervousness, haste and arrogance will not help. They will only drive us further from a solution. We have a saying: "Avoid shortcuts — they might be the wrong way".

However, I must regrettably inform the Council about the cruel reality in Kosovo and Metohija, which testifies to the lack of freedom and security there. From 15 August to 1 December 2006, 75 ethnically motivated attacks were committed, in which 23 persons of Serb nationality were injured. The extremists also targeted members of other communities. The house of Zecir Zurapi, a member of the ethnic Gorany community in the village of Gornja Rapca, was blown up on 1 October 2006. The perpetrators of that terrorist act, like so many others in the past, have not been identified. It is significant, however, that immediately before the attack, Zurapi was involved in plans to have the Gorany students educated in line with the Serbian curriculum. As a result, more than 1,000 students in three schools were not able to attend classes for more than 30 days.

Over the same period, in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, 17 transmitter stations belonging to the Serbian mobile operator Telekom Srbija were put out of operation. This is a virtual criminal act that is taking place before the very eyes of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), because, since 1997, Telekom Srbija has had a valid licence to operate throughout the entire territory of Serbia, and has paid all of its taxes to UNMIK and the Kosovo Provisional Government. That act has further isolated the Serbian population. It should also be pointed out that, in the context of all types of communications, UNMIK has consistently tried, to varying degrees, to extend its mandate, thus violating the sovereignty of Serbia. There are many examples of that in its activities related to the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Union of Railways, the International Committee for Railway Transport, the Universal Postal Union and the International Telecommunication Union. All of those activities are aimed at taking away attributes and symbols through international specialized organizations, thus prejudging the final status of Kosovo and Metohija. In that way, preconditions for cooperation and confidence are naturally further undermined.

Furthermore, there have been drastic and selective electricity cuts. Such discrimination reached its apogee in the Serbian communities of central Kosovo and the municipality of Strpce, where one hour of power supply is followed by 10 to 20 hours of blackouts. Add to that the fact that there have been 260 inter-ethnic incidents since 24 October 2005, in which all the victims were Serbs, and the trend becomes more than obvious.

Let me add another sombre detail: even with the assistance of UNMIK, we have not been able to make the Albanian side agree — at least at a declaratory level — to the need to rebuild the houses of Serbs from Badovac village who were expelled in the riots of March 2004. At that time, Serbian houses all over Kosovo were set on fire and destroyed. People were expelled, and some were killed.

As for the return of expelled and internally displaced persons, I would like to recall that, from 1999 to date, as many as 250,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have not been in a position to return to Kosovo and Metohija. According to our data, 2 per cent have returned; according to UNMIK, the figure is 5 per cent. Major demographic and migratory shifts have taken place in Kosovo and Metohija. The population in Pristina, the capital, has increased threefold, and it is currently estimated at 600,000. There are no more than some 100 Serbs in Pristina. Before 1999, there were about 40,000 Serbs in Pristina.

As far as Serbian religious monuments, cultural heritage and religious freedoms are concerned, Albanians pay lip service to their protection. Serbian shrines are in fact looted and desecrated on a daily basis. The church of the Holy Shroud in the village of Babin Most near Obilic and the church of Saint Petka in Gojbulja, in the municipality of Vucitrn, were broken into and ransacked. The orchards of the Devic monastery, in the village of Lausa in the municipality of Srbica, were completely destroyed, even though they were guarded by KFOR and the Kosovo

Protection Service police after having been set on fire in March 2004.

Illegal construction close to cultural sites within the proposed protected zones is rampant. At the end of September, large-scale construction was begun in the vicinity of the monument honouring the mediaeval Serbian Kosovo heroes in Gazimestan, near Pristina. During the same period, in the neighbourhood of the village of Velika Hoca — a village that has 13 churches dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth century — an industrial facility is being built. There are plans to build a large hotel close to Gorioc monastery. These so-called construction activities naturally give rise to serious concern, since they are being carried out in close proximity to religious and cultural sites, which, in the negotiations on the future status of the province, should be granted the status of protected zones where urbanization and industrial construction are not allowed.

Those activities are obviously a deliberate attempt to prevent the preservation of the cultural and environmental integrity of the sites. The Government of Serbia and all the members of the Contact Group are insisting on that, making the negotiations on cultural heritage one of their priorities.

It should also be pointed out that attempts are being made by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to revise history and to delete all traces of Serb existence in Kosovo and Metohija. One of the most flagrant instances of quasi-historical propaganda by the provisional Ministry of Culture of Kosovo took place in May 2005 in Paris. The Minister of Culture, Astrit Haracia, tried to distribute in the UNESCO building a pamphlet entitled *Monuments of Kosova*. The publication makes no mention whatsoever of the Serbian contribution to the heritage of Kosovo and Metohija. That publication outraged the participants and UNESCO officials. Its distribution was stopped by Søren Jessen-Petersen, who was head of UNMIK at the time, at the explicit request of our Minister for Foreign Affairs. Regrettably, the Provisional Ministry of Culture of Kosovo, even after that unfortunate incident a year and a half ago, has continued to promote more or less the same ideas in a different form. On its web site, www.visitkosova.org, a one-sided historical version is presented stating that Kosovo and Metohija has been exclusively the land of the Albanians since earliest history.

The role of UNMIK is, unfortunately, giving rise to concern. Although it is unambiguously defined in all documents as a United Nations transitional administration with a clear mandate, it often assumes the role of a condominium by seeking to create a State for Albanians. Almost as a rule, UNMIK has adopted a sympathetic attitude and ignored Albanian extremism.

I would like to recall that Ambassador Kai Eide, in his comprehensive review of the situation in Kosovo, emphasized that, along with the process of seeking a solution concerning the future status of Kosovo and Metohija, it is crucially important to continue with the standards implementation as the only way forward. Ambassador Eide also pointed out other very important and substantial problems. Unfortunately, for the time being, there are no serious signs that anyone is willing to recognize at least some of those perfectly adequate and constructive recommendations. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, said a fortnight ago that compromise was impossible and stupid. That statement cast a shadow on the constructive efforts being made, especially given that compromise is one of the important principles endorsed by the Contact Group at its meeting in January 2006.

Anyone can see that organized crime, human trafficking and corruption are rampant in Kosovo and Metohija. The drug and arms trade and smuggling provide a lifeline for the criminal and terrorist business, before the very eyes of the international community, the police and the military. Mafia-style Albanian clans are currently flourishing. The most recent and alarming incident occurred 10 days ago, when an Albanian terrorist paramilitary formation in Kosovo and Metohija began to intercept vehicles, asking for identification papers and intimidating passengers. Also, several days ago, on 8 December, barely a few minutes before a train was scheduled to arrive, unidentified terrorists blew up railway tracks in the vicinity of Mijalic village, in the municipality of Vucitrn. The only passengers in the train were Serbs, who travel regularly from Priluzje, Plemetine and Zvecan on this line. The blowing up of the tracks was yet another horrific terrorist attack against the Serbs.

Difficult as it may be, the situation and the events in Kosovo and Metohija should be looked at in a realistic, responsible and objective fashion. Any precipitous solution would cost the region, the province itself and the international community dearly;

instead of achieving a sustainable solution, they would have to deal with an even more difficult and complex situation in Kosovo and Metohija. A hasty solution would set a precedent that would open up a Pandora's box.

I must emphasize once again here that the entire strategy adopted by the Albanian side in the past actually boils down to not engaging in the status negotiations. The Kosovo Albanians are idly waiting to be given yet another Albanian State in the Balkans within the internationally recognized borders of Serbia. From the point of view of the interests of the international community at large, such an outcome is unacceptable; we cannot but take into account the facts.

I would like to stress that the solution has to be a compromise reached in the interests of peace and lasting stability. It has to be sought, on an agreed basis, by the two negotiating parties — Serbian and Albanian. Belgrade, the Government of Serbia and the Serbs of Kosovo in particular are seeking to reach an agreement that guarantees a durable solution with respect to their coexistence in a modern, democratic and decentralized State.

The Serbian side therefore sees the solution to the Kosovo problem as based on the implementation of the principles and specific solutions contained in the platform of the Serbian negotiating team on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija. It remains the best way to resolve the current horrific situation in the province. A different outcome would create unlawfulness, and unlawfulness breeds more unlawfulness.

The international community should support, and demonstrate such support by its deeds, its commitment to a stable and safe region. That can be achieved only by taking steps to introduce the rule of law, punish criminals and terrorists, and create the security and other conditions necessary to a normal and dignified life. A life of dignity is not only defined by the fundamental documents of international law, but is also embodied in European standards recognizing the respect of human rights and freedoms.

Of course, my country relies primarily on the law — domestic law, international law, democratic principles, agreements and treaties — but first and foremost on the inviolable principle of justice. We firmly believe that there is a way out of this situation. A sustainable solution can be based only on giving up extreme demands and embracing a rational approach and compromise. In practice, that means substantial autonomy for Kosovo — the kind of autonomy that no European or other State has granted to their region so far. It is there that, despite the obvious difficulties, there is manoeuvring space for agreement and compromise. There is manoeuvring space to find a solution. The talks held so far have not borne fruit, largely due to the lack of engagement and the insufficient number of meetings. We propose that the Vienna talks be immediately resumed in order to define modalities for the broadest possible autonomy of Kosovo Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, with the participation of the European Union. The talks should be intensive so as to enable us to obtain results soon.

The threat of violence that is being heard more or less openly from the Albanian side cannot be accepted as a rational argument. Perhaps today violence is a consequence of a conjuncture, but a conjuncture is a variable. Constants are always better than variables, and, in this instance, a constant means dialogue, compromise and rejection of the use of violence.

Serbia voiced its position on Kosovo and Metohija just a month and a half ago in a fully legitimate and very powerful fashion. More than half of registered voters with the right to vote opted in favour of the new Constitution of Serbia. Its preamble incorporates the fundamental principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). That constitutional provision has been practically based on the Charter of the United Nations, on which this body which I have the honour to address today is also based. By adopting the Constitution of their country in a referendum, an absolute majority of the citizens of Serbia reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of the inviolability of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of democratic States and to the inviolability of the borders of the Republic of Serbia, and thus to the United Nations and the Security Council.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, for his briefing. I should like also welcome the presence among us of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and of Mr. Çeku, Prime Minister of Kosovo, as part of the delegation led by Mr. Rücker.

The representative of Finland will make a statement later on behalf of the presidency of the European Union, with which I fully align myself.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/906) stresses the sustained progress that has been made in standards implementation, in line with the calls of Council members. This is the case, in particular, with regard to the priorities identified by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Contact Group with respect to the protection of minorities and the rule of law.

We note with satisfaction the adoption of a number of laws intended to ensure the protection of minorities. This is necessary to affirm Kosovo's multi-ethnic character. This is a positive development, but it needs to be built upon. All the standards must be implemented tangibly and rapidly, in particular with respect to property rights and the rule of law, and especially regarding the judicial sector.

We also note the drop in ethnic-based crimes. Nevertheless, such acts continue to be unacceptable; beyond the necessary condemnation in words, they must also be dealt with appropriately through the legal system.

The report of the Secretary-General stresses the efforts being made by the provisional authorities to establish contacts with minority communities; it is thus all the more disappointing that Serb leaders in Kosovo continue to remain outside the political process, which is to the detriment of their community. The Belgrade authorities should remove all obstacles preventing Kosovo Serbs from participating in the Provisional Institutions.

My delegation reiterates its full support for the negotiating process being led by Mr. Ahtisaari. We note with regret that the positions of the parties, as the Secretary-General's report observes, remain far apart. We have taken note of the Special Envoy's announcement that his recommendations will be submitted after the parliamentary elections in Serbia. The Security Council should then take decisions on the basis of those recommendations, including on adopting the international presence in Kosovo.

It is important not to delay the resolution of an issue that weighs on regional stability and impedes the implementation of the reforms that we all wish to see. The ultimate solution, which must be acceptable to the majority of the population in Kosovo, should also respect the guidelines that were established by the Contact Group and endorsed by the Security Council.

Mrs. Martínez Gramuglia (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, for his briefing and his comments on the latest developments in Kosovo. We welcome the President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic. We also welcome Prime Minister Çeku as part of the delegation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Let me also echo the gratitude expressed in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/906) to the men and women of UNMIK for their steadfastness and their commitment to the values and principles of the Organization as they carry out their daily tasks. Argentina has been participating in UNMIK with police, military and diplomatic personnel since the very beginning of the Mission, and we will continue to support its work in its upcoming phases as well.

The report gives an account, once again, of sustained progress on standards implementation, with special emphasis on the 13 priorities identified by the Contact Group last June. We would like to underline the willingness of the Provisional Institutions to implement the standards programme. Without any doubt, this contributes to strengthening the Kosovo Institutions. Standards implementation is also a sine qua non condition for making Kosovo's European perspective a reality, and it must continue to be the core of the efforts throughout the future status process for Kosovo, and even beyond.

However, it is disappointing that the positive effects of implementation do not fully benefit the Kosovo Serb community, due primarily to their own reluctance to cooperate with the Pristina authorities. We urge the Kosovo Serb community to act with the maturity necessary to assume their responsibilities in a truly multi-ethnic society. The leaders of the Serb National Council must end their boycott of contacts with the Provisional Institutions, while Belgrade must remove without delay all impediments to such participation.

For their part, the leaders of the Provisional Institutions must persist vigorously with standards implementation if they are to accomplish the aim of

laying the foundation of a multi-ethnic and democratic society in which all communities live in dignity and security. All groups that compose Kosovo's society must display wisdom at this critical moment for the future of Kosovo, and their leaders must seize this opportunity to promote reconciliation and dialogue.

Mr. Rücker has indicated that the political situation in Kosovo is dominated by the future status process. It is undeniable that there are differing expectations regarding the outcome, but we believe that it is necessary to maintain the momentum in the process under way, because uncertainty could result in greater instability. On the contrary, the primary aim of this process should be to ensure that all those who live in Kosovo can have a safe, decent, peaceful and dignified life.

To achieve this, it is essential that any agreed approach be based on negotiations between the parties, and not something imposed internationally. This, in our view, is the basis for any sustainable agreement and we believe that it should be a priority for the international community. Any solution must contribute to regional stability, with a realistic, viable, sustainable agreement that is in full compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). It must also be based on and consistent with the Guiding Principles for the settlement of Kosovo's status, formulated by the Contact Group and endorsed by the Security Council — in particular, full respect for the territorial integrity and internal stability of regional neighbours.

Argentina considers that there can be no prosperous and peaceful future for Kosovo without complete respect for the diversity of its people. It is key to stability and to social and economic development, both in Kosovo and in the entire region, that the status process concludes satisfactorily, with an outcome that is acceptable to the majority and at the same time respects and protects the rights of minorities.

We call on the leaders of both parties, who have a historic opportunity in their hands, to demonstrate the vision and the political will to achieve a settlement that will enable Kosovo to enter a new phase of its history and will enable the international community to continue to support a sustainable solution for the Kosovo issue in full respect for the principle of territorial integrity.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): The United States joins in welcoming to the Council Special Representative Rücker, Prime Minister Çeku and Ms. Raskovic-Ivic.

The United States continues to support the role the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is playing in developing meaningful self-government in Kosovo, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We appreciate the leadership of Mr. Rücker and the work he is doing to prepare Kosovo for its future political status.

The United States is encouraged by the progress Kosovo is making in implementing the Contact Group's standards priorities. Kosovo should make every effort, with the full support of UNMIK, to complete all of the priorities and to continue work on the overall standards for Kosovo, paying particular attention to respecting individual property rights.

We strongly condemn the 8 December explosion of a railway line in the municipality of Vushtrri and note with concern reports of illegal checkpoints being established in western Kosovo. We call upon all sides to refrain from violence and to respect the rule of law. Individuals responsible for the 8 December explosion and other violent incidents should be brought to justice. Belgrade must also do its part to help improve the situation in Kosovo by supporting Kosovo Serb participation in local institutions, returning cadastral records taken from Kosovo and working with the international community to ensure stability, particularly in northern Kosovo.

Six and a half years have passed since international community intervention brought an end to the fighting in Kosovo. The people of Kosovo — all the people of Kosovo — deserve clarity about their future. As the Secretary-General notes in his recent report on Kosovo, the mere speculation about delay in the status process has led to a feeling of uncertainty as to the way ahead and could represent a source of instability if momentum abates. We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that it is important to keep the momentum in the political process and achieve a status settlement soon.

We thank President Ahtisaari for his leadership of the Kosovo status talks. The United States supports President Ahtisaari's decision to present his report without delay to the parties following the 21 January

elections in Serbia. To that end, we ask both Belgrade and Pristina to receive President Ahtisaari's report with open minds, a willingness to be flexible on the many issues under discussion, and an understanding of the importance of reaching a settlement that helps accelerate that region's Euro-Atlantic integration.

As the United Nations-led status process enters its concluding stages, both sides must be realistic about the probable outcome. As the Contact Group has stated, there will be no return of Kosovo to the pre-1999 situation, no partition of Kosovo, and no union of Kosovo with any other or part of another country. Additionally, the settlement must solidify Kosovo's multi-ethnicity and must also offer real protection for the political and cultural rights of all communities in Kosovo. At the same time, the settlement must be acceptable to the people of Kosovo.

Finally, it is important for UNMIK, as well as the Pristina and Belgrade authorities, to work closely with the representatives of NATO, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and others in the international community on the transition planning needed for the period following the conclusion of the status process.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): At the outset, allow me to join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Rücker for his briefing. I would also like to thank Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo, Mr. Çeku, at this meeting.

While a form for the final status of Kosovo dominates the political situation in Kosovo, the implementation of the Kosovo standards is the challenge which the leaders of Kosovo must address on a day-to-day basis. Since the standards include some important elements which provide the foundation for governance based on democracy and the rule of law, Japan would like to reaffirm the importance of continued implementation efforts by the future Government in Kosovo, regardless of the final status.

In that regard, we welcome the steady progress on the implementation of 13 priority areas, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General. In addition, we appreciate the creation of structures and work plans by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to implement the European Partnership Action Plan, in which the standards are now integrally incorporated. Those efforts can be regarded as evidence of Kosovo's commitment to the continuing implementation of the standards in the future.

Needless to say, serious work should go into all standards implementation efforts. However, I would like to mention the following three points that require particular attention in light of the anticipated situation following the settlement of the final status.

First, with regard to functioning democratic institutions, it is a serious problem that no progress has been reported on the issue of participation of Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo's political institutions. We express our deep concern, in particular, with regard to the three northern municipalities' ongoing boycott of contacts with the Provisional Institutions, and urge those municipalities once again to resume their contacts without delay. To solve that problem, the Government of Serbia, as a responsible member of the international community, should respond positively to the international calls for action on that issue.

Secondly, with regard to the economy, a stable society will not be achieved through the stabilization of governance alone, but also requires economic recovery. The economy of Kosovo is hardly self-sufficient. The Provisional Institutions need to redouble their efforts to build the necessary economic system and institutions, and also to address the issue of youth unemployment, which some say exceeds 60 per cent. In addition, special attention should be given to creating job opportunities for returnees and minority groups.

Thirdly, with regard to the freedom of movement, the mistrust among ethnic groups, especially the fear among the Kosovo Serbs and other minority populations with regard to the majority population, is an underlying factor that is hindering freedom of movement. Serbian and Albanian leaders alike therefore need to take the necessary measures for confidence-building among the people. That issue, together with the aforementioned problem of insufficient job opportunities, constitutes an obstacle to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. For that reason, we call for prompt measures in that regard.

I would also like to make several points concerning the efforts of the international community towards determination of the final status of Kosovo. First, Japan has been fully supporting the efforts of

Special Envoy Mr. Ahtisaari and, in that context, we express our understanding of his decision to present his comprehensive proposal immediately after the upcoming Serbian elections. Secondly, we welcome the careful preparations now under way for the transition to an international civilian presence after the withdrawal of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of UNMIK and the European Union. The transition needs to take place without any delay upon the determination of the final status.

Before concluding my remarks today, I would like to send an important message to all parties. While the situation in Kosovo will reach a critical juncture at the beginning of next year, we would like to strongly urge all parties to act with the utmost prudence to ensure that the final status will contribute to peace and security in the region.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation at today's meeting of the Security Council of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and thank her for her substantive statement.

We listened carefully to the statement made by Mr. Rücker, head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which would have benefited had Mr. Rücker not exceeded his mandate and had he properly complied with the modalities of today's meeting with regard to his accompanying delegation.

We take note of the Secretary-General's report. Despite a few positive advances, the achievements in implementing the standards established by the international community with respect to ethnic minorities cannot yet be described as significant. In particular, the problem of protecting the religious and cultural heritage of minorities, decentralization, the return of non-Albanian refugees and many other issues are still far from having been resolved.

We commend the enhanced legal basis aimed at guaranteeing the rights of the non-Albanian population in Kosovo. Nevertheless, the key problem is still the same: the growing gap between the existence of relevant documents and the actual situation in the province. Unfortunately, it must be said that, at this stage, the pledges to guarantee the rights and security of non-Albanians in Kosovo have not yet been implemented. In that connection, we should recall the conclusion of the Secretary-General that, in order to ensure confidence-building and stability, it is important to guarantee that priority be placed not on symbolic but on concrete measures.

There must be more attention given to the property rights of non-Albanians, including Orthodox churches, during the privatization process in Kosovo. Any mistakes in that regard could well eventually lead to the establishment of a single ethnic society in Kosovo.

A precondition for progress in the standards programme is to enhance security and to combat organized crime. Without that, freedom of movement, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and economic recovery will be impossible.

We are concerned that, despite the decrease in the overall number in ethnically motivated crimes, acts of violence against the security of Kosovo's Serbs continue.

The periodically heard threats that there will be mass unrest in Kosovo if a decision on status is not taken by a given date are also a subject of concern. We can only interpret that as unacceptable blackmail of the international community or as an attempt by radicals to incite acts of violence.

We strongly condemn the organization of mass unrest in Kosovo on 28 November, which included acts of violence against the UNMIK office in Pristina. We believe that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo and the international presence will keep the situation under control. They must not allow a repetition of such events in the future.

We share the view of the Secretary-General as regards the unacceptability of allowing political events or the timetable to be determined by the street. We are convinced that any measures to destabilize or stir up the situation in the province would force the Security Council to review the situation, which could lead to an immediate halt of the future status process.

As was highlighted in particular during the recent meeting in Moscow with the UNMIK delegation and Mr. Çeku, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, the Kosovo Albanian leadership has the primary responsibility for not allowing extremist acts on the territory of the province that can only lead to complicating the settlement process. We strongly appeal to the leaders in

the province to decisively intensify their efforts to ensure genuine and lasting progress in the implementation of the standards, in particular those essential for ensuring a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

The Serbian side must, of course, play its part in that regard. We understand that the Secretary-General is disappointed with the non-participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. At the same time, it does demonstrate that the confidence of minorities in the Institutions continues to be very low. The majority community should establish a climate conducive to encouraging minorities, and Kosovo Serbs in particular, to cooperate with provincial authorities and participate in all areas of life in Kosovo.

Achieving tangible and effective progress in the standards programme is one of the determining factors that will influence the rate and outcome of the negotiating process on the future status of Kosovo under the mediation of Mr. Ahtisaari, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

We welcome the wise decision to suspend the status talks until the completion of the elections in Serbia. At this sensitive phase in defining the future status of Kosovo, it is extremely important to ensure consistent efforts by Belgrade and Pristina to find an effective and mutually acceptable negotiated outcome and to sustain international efforts to assist in achieving that outcome, on the basis of the fundamental principles set out in resolution 1244 (1999) and the Contact Group's documents.

The Secretary-General has rightly pointed out the need for both parties to show more flexibility and willingness to compromise in the negotiating process. They are called upon to find areas of agreement and to take long-lasting and sustainable decisions. We believe that that should be the focus of the comprehensive status proposal that the Special Envoy will eventually submit to the parties. We expect measures that will return the future status process to its earlier basis on internationally agreed principles, which are the only possible way to resolve the situation in Kosovo. In the first place, that concerns the need to give priority to negotiations and a rejection of strict timelines that are not motivated by the effort to gradually harmonize the positions of the Kosovo Serbs and Albanians. We must bring the parties back to negotiations, while taking into account the interests of both Belgrade and Pristina and not twist anyone's arms. We need to look more carefully at the concrete proposals coming from Belgrade, which demonstrate an attempt by Serbs to participate in the negotiating process.

We see no alternative to a negotiated compromise, however difficult it may be difficult to achieve. That is what is most important now. Condemnation of Belgrade for not showing a constructive approach or for having prejudged the status of Kosovo is unfounded. We also wish to align ourselves with the appeal by the Secretary-General on all parties to refrain from any unilateral acts or statements.

In any case, the decision on the future status of the province will have a universal character. Only a negotiated decision, rather than a unilateral or imposed one, regarding Kosovo can be supported by the Security Council and would avoid setting a negative precedent in the context of internal crisis resolution.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): We too welcome the participation of Special Representative Rücker, Prime Minister Çeku and Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic in today's debate regarding the future status of Kosovo.

It is indeed the desire of the delegation of Ghana to be a part of the consensus that will finally emerge in the Security Council on the future of Kosovo. Nonetheless, we recognize that this remains an exceedingly complex issue, given the wide gulf that persists between the parties. The dilemma is how to resolve the claim to self-determination by the majority Albanian population of Kosovo, on the one hand, and the Serbian Government's anxiety to preserve the territorial integrity of the Serbian State, on the other, as reflected in the provisions of the new Constitution, adopted in October this year.

In that regard, let me state that Ghana attaches equal weight to the two conflicting claims, and believes that all possibilities for a negotiated settlement of the current impasse must be explored, in conformity with the principles of international law. In addition, we are mindful of the fact that there can be no lasting peace and stability in Kosovo unless the final status process results in an outcome that guarantees respect for the rights of all ethnic groups in Kosovo and also encourages their effective and meaningful participation in public affairs within a democratic dispensation.

We believe the current strategy contains the right elements, with its emphasis on the creation of functioning democratic institutions that can effectively entrench the rule of law, ensure the freedom of movement in a safe and secure environment and facilitate the return of displaced persons, not to mention the creation of a vibrant economy for the well-being of the people of Kosovo. We are encouraged in that regard by the actions undertaken by UNMIK and the Office of the Special Envoy during the reporting period, both to meet the institutional needs of Kosovo and to engage the parties on the issues of decentralization, cultural and religious heritage and community rights.

Although the progress made so far does not measure up to expectations with respect to the 13 priorities for standards implementation, it is not for want of trying. In the absence of a strong political will to engage their Albanian counterparts, the Kosovo Serbians have impeded progress.

In that connection, the continuing refusal of the Serbian minority to participate in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government — in spite of the various overtures made by the Government, coupled with the institutional mechanisms being put in place to ensure accountability and respect for the rights of all minorities — is a major challenge. We urge the Kosovo Serbs and the authorities in Belgrade not to dismiss those positive overtures as cynical manipulations of the final status process without subjecting them to a practical test. And the only way to do so is to become involved in the process of institution-building that is shaping the future of their homeland.

At the same time, we find the pattern of hostility among Albanian youth towards the Serbs particularly disturbing, as it does not augur well for harmonious existence between the two communities in future. We urge that conscious efforts be made to instil in the youth of the various ethnic groups the values of tolerance and unity. Otherwise, the current efforts will indeed amount to nothing but token gestures.

For us, therefore, the critical question today is whether at this point in time Kosovo has the internal strength and resilience to withstand the pressures of the conflicting claims on its future status. And closely related to that is whether the authorities in Belgrade and the Kosovo Serbs can be brought around to accepting an independent and sovereign Kosovo with the levers of power firmly in the hands of an Albanian majority. Ghana does not have easy answers to those questions.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I join others in welcoming the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, and thank him for his presentation. I welcome the presence of the President of the Coordinating Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, and I also welcome Prime Minister Çeku's presence among the delegation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Greece associates itself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Greece welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the standards, in particular of the Contact Group's 13 priorities for standards implementation, and stresses the need for the continued commitment of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in that regard. The effective fulfilment of the standards, which should by no means be limited to the 13 points mentioned above, is central in achieving a sustainable multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo, living in peace and stability.

The recent adoption of legislation such as the laws on freedom of religion, the use of languages and cultural heritage is a significant development, and we look very much forward to their full implementation.

Progress made in the functioning of the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs marks positive steps. We emphasize that the prevalence of the rule of law is key to a working democracy. However, we note that there seems to be no substantial progress on decentralization beyond the first three pilot projects, although originally there were supposed to be five, and we call on all parties involved to take the process forward.

We fully support the principled stance of the Secretary-General with regard to the strong condemnation of violence. We express our concern with regard to the recent explosions on railway tracks in central Kosovo and reports on the setting up of checkpoints by masked gunmen. We note that attacks against religious sites have decreased and reiterate that such incidents should have no place whatsoever in a modern and democratic society.

Positive developments have marked the economic sector as well, aiming at attracting foreign investment and establishing the Central Banking Authority of Kosovo. We understand that Belgrade made an offer on the provision of electricity and that currently UNMIK and Belgrade are very close to agreeing on how that offer could be accepted. We would appreciate further information on those talks, as we very strongly support any initiative that improves the everyday life of the population of Kosovo.

As the Secretary-General also mentioned in his report, concerns still remain with regard to the low number of minority returns. The limited results cannot be attributed solely to the lack of economic opportunity. We cannot ignore the fact that the perception, or the reality, of security and freedom of movement remains the elementary factor that determines progress in that area.

We cannot but stress once more the need for the involvement of the Kosovo Serbs and the importance of their engagement with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. The participation of the Kosovo Serbs in those Institutions is key in serving their own best interests, and we therefore urge Belgrade to encourage them in that direction.

Finally, with reference to the political process for the determination of Kosovo's future status, I would like to reiterate my country's position that the best possible and most sustainable outcome of the future status process is a mutually acceptable solution. We therefore welcome the fact that the international community has realized the need for a certain flexibility in the timeframe that allows for a more genuine status process and gives the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, among others, the necessary time to press on with their efforts on standards implementation.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): We too welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, and thank him for his presentation. We also welcome the representative of Serbia, Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, and to thank her as well.

We wish to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for their continued support and assistance in the implementation of standards in Kosovo and for their efforts to find a solution to the problems in that country.

We welcome the progress made by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo in their sustained effort to implement the 13 priority points for standards implementation presented by the Contact Group. We note from the report of the Secretary-General that substantial progress has been made in that regard. We also commend the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo for the steps they are taking to strengthen democratic institutions and promote the rule of law in Kosovo.

While we hail the progress in the implementation of standards, we regret that the issue of the future status of Kosovo remains in abeyance. Undoubtedly that has taken more prominence and visibility in the political life of Kosovo. Nevertheless, we commend the Special Envoy, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, for all his efforts in convening further rounds of direct talks between Belgrade and Pristina. We are, however, concerned that the positions of the two parties still remain far apart. We are mindful of the caution given by the Secretary-General in the report concerning the impact of the failure to bridge the differences between the two sides. We are troubled by the risk that further delay could potentially raise instability in that country.

We therefore reiterate our call to the leaders of both sides to negotiate in good faith. We appeal to the Serbian side to encourage Kosovo Serbs to participate in political institutions and to the Kosovo leaders to reach out to the Serbs and other minorities. We also urge them to refrain from any public pronouncements and unilateral decisions that may be construed by the other side as being hostile and provocative. Continued violence that seeks to effect political change is unhelpful and can only serve to undermine the peace process.

Since we are about to conclude our term in the Council, we shall not be members when the Special Envoy is expected to present his recommendations next March. However, we believe that it is in the interest of all the people of Kosovo that they and their leaders use the opportunity between now and March to promote reconciliation and dialogue. We urge them to accept and support the recommendations of the Special Envoy when they are presented.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): Allow me also to join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Rücker for his

briefing today. On behalf of my delegation, I would also like to thank Madam Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija for her statement. We too welcome the presence at the meeting of the Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo, Mr. Çeku, as a member of the delegation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered later this afternoon by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. That is why I will limit myself to the following comments.

In general, we share the positive evaluation of the developments in Kosovo since the launch of the status process, as presented in the latest report of Secretary-General (S/2006/906). We would like to join the Secretary-General's call to the majority of the population in Kosovo and to Kosovo's official representatives to sustain this strength and to demonstrate political responsibility, maturity and a firm dedication to the non-use of violence in achieving political change in Kosovo and in defining its status. We call on the Kosovo authorities to take all appropriate measures to guarantee security for all citizens and to address the issue of impunity.

Without thorough investigation of crimes and bringing perpetrators to justice, peaceful coexistence and reconciliation among communities in Kosovo, in our view, cannot be possible. We believe that is a matter of critical importance — especially when the UNMIK transition period is most likely ahead — that the authority of an international presence, whether it be the present or possibly a future one, is not undermined by any unreasonable actions or provocations.

The role of UNMIK, the Kosovo Force and other international bodies and organizations in Kosovo is still vital for and instrumental in the peace and stability of the region and the outcome of the status process and its implementation. We believe that the international presence will also have to be sustained in Kosovo after status determination.

We agree with Mr. Rücker that the implementation of standards must remain an important priority. We note with satisfaction the generally positive trends and the commitment of the Government led by Mr. Çeku to continue its efforts in that direction. It is of crucial importance to ensure that these efforts are maintained and remain sustainable, with special focus on the 13 priorities identified by the Contact Group.

I would like to reiterate that standards implementation is equally essential for securing the multi-ethnic and democratic nature of Kosovo as well as for its European perspective. The European Union is expected to play a more visible and decisive role in the next stage of the status process, so the more standards Kosovo can meet today, the further it can go in the future in terms of the integration processes, regardless of the dynamic of the status process.

Multi-ethnicity in practice means that Kosovo is also a homeland for Serbs. In this regard, we agree with the Secretary-General that progress will be achieved by demonstrating through actions, not words, that everyone has a future in Kosovo. In our view, it is the ultimate responsibility of the Kosovo Albanian majority to demonstrate through the adoption of adequate measures that it is ready to accept responsibility for the future well-being and security of Serbs and other ethnic minorities in Kosovo. The Serbian community in Kosovo should feel that it is an integral and welcome part of society as a whole and that its social and economic status will be acknowledged and honoured once the status implementation process is under way.

On the other hand, we believe that the issue of the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Provisional Institutions should be separated from the status process. In this connection, we would also like to reiterate the call on Belgrade and Pristina to allow and encourage Kosovo Serbs to exercise their rights fully through their participation in the Institutions. We believe that will also positively contribute to the status negotiation process.

In conclusion, we reiterate that we support the process led by Mr. Ahtisaari and continue to believe it is necessary to find a lasting and balanced settlement as its outcome. It should be the highest priority and imperative to seek a balanced settlement and compromise from both sides through interactive talks that would, at the end of the day, reflect the objective concerns of all parties involved and strengthen regional security and stability.

Finally, we would like to stress that, in any outcome of the status definition process, Kosovars and

Serbs will have to live together, side by side. It is in their vital interest to find the best and most sustainable form of peaceful coexistence and cooperation that reflects their rightful ambitions and concerns.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation also welcomes the representative of Serbia and the Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions in Kosovo.

In appointing Mr. Ahtisaari to lead the negotiations on the status of Kosovo, the Secretary-General, with the support of the Security Council and international community, sought to establish a political process that would eventually lead Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo to live together within a multi-ethnic society.

Aware of what is at stake here, given the stability of the whole region, Congo associated itself with the Contact Group's appeal to complete negotiations by the end of 2006. Today, in the light of the comments made by the Secretary-General and with the additional information provided by Mr. Rücker, it has to be noted that we are at a crossroads after seven years of interim administration and provisional status. Action without delay appears to be an urgent necessity.

We await with great interest the submission of the settlement proposal, which Mr. Ahtisaari had to defer on 10 November in order to take into account the parliamentary elections planned by Belgrade for 21 January. In the light of the situation described in the Secretary-General's report, it is important not to delay this process any further as that would lead to obvious risks, including the resurgence of violence carried out by armed groups whose only objective is to exploit potential frustrations.

At a time when we have every reason to believe that we are close to the finish line, the Security Council must express forcefully its condemnation of any unilateral act or any threat or use of violence that could undermine the political process that Mr. Ahtisaari has led with much effort. We should also deplore the fact that the Serb leaders in Kosovo have chosen to remain on the sidelines of the political process by being absent from the workings of the Provisional Institutions in Kosovo. As stressed by the Secretary-General, whatever the outcome of the settlement of Kosovo's future status, Serbs and Albanians must find common solutions to the problems that they share, which arise in relation to services that must be provided to all, without distinction.

The report cites the limited progress in the talks, caused by the apparently irreconcilable positions of the two parties. We express once again our full confidence in Mr. Ahtisaari and hope that he will be able to propose a settlement that will meet the international community's expectations.

Apart from these meagre results, it is encouraging to note the positive impact that the question of status has had on the other phase of the political process: the implementation of the standards. At the initiative of the Government of Kosovo, supported by UNMIK — which we commend for its tireless efforts — some positive progress has been made in areas essential for the reconciliation of communities and the establishment of a multi-ethnic society. That progress concerns in particular the 13 priorities defined by UNMIK and the Contact Group.

The establishment of pilot municipal units will help to limit the deep division between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and will eventually promote the development that we all hope for: seeing Kosovo's Serbs and Albanians living together with respect for their diversity and mindful of the protection of minority rights.

So it is up to the parties and their various communities to shoulder their responsibilities in this final stage. Ultimately, whatever the political settlement that is achieved, international support will be necessary to ensure the viability of the process.

Mr. Orozco (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, like previous speakers, I wish to thank Mr. Joachim Rücker, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for presenting the report on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) between 15 August and 31 October 2006. I also thank Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordinating Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, for her presentation. In addition, I welcome the presence of Mr. Agim Çeku, Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/906), which objectively describes the developments in the Kosovo process during the period I have indicated, presents us with important elements for consideration

in the definition of Kosovo's status. On behalf of my delegation, I wish to highlight some positive developments that have occurred on the ground. Despite the difficulties that are still perceived, those developments should be encouraged so as to provide constructive support for the Kosovo process.

First, the effort made in 2006 by the Government of Kosovo to implement the standards — particularly the 13 priorities identified by the Contact Group — has been commendable. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, the progress made in standards implementation strengthens Kosovo's institutions and helps lay the groundwork for future development.

It is also relevant that, in this most recent period, some significant events have taken place in the economic sphere. I am referring in particular to the progress made in developing mining and the power generation associated with it, in addition to the rehabilitation of a number of power generation facilities. The international investors' conference for Kosovo, held on 10 and 11 October, was also an important step in attracting foreign investment.

As my delegations has stated on a number of occasions, any political settlement that determines Kosovo's status will be viable only if long-term socio-economic stability is achieved. In that connection, we urge Kosovo's economic actors to continue in the effort to get its productive sectors working and to ensure Kosovo's effective integration into its regional environment.

Furthermore, it cannot be denied that there are still barriers in Kosovo that are difficult to overcome. The process related to future status is a dominant factor in political life, as stated by Mr. Rücker. The feeling of uncertainty helps to create instability. The parties continue to express opposing positions that leave little room for negotiation. That situation does not help to create an appropriate context for reconciling all social sectors and improving the conditions for reaching a final settlement.

The Secretary-General indicated in his report that incidents of violence involving Kosovo Serbs have continued. It is also worrisome that Serb participation in the main political institutions continues to be practically non-existent. Likewise, according to the figures provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, while the number of minorities returning to Kosovo has remained constant, it is still unsatisfactory.

The definition of Kosovo's future status must be inclusive and not exclude any of the sectors that make up society. In other words, the building of a multi-ethnic society requires active participation by all sectors involved. Without such a consensus, it will not be possible to find a lasting solution, over and above the legal identity this territory might adopt.

Once again, Peru wishes to express its support for the political process aimed at finding a negotiated solution to Kosovo's status. In that context, we support the work carried out by Mr. Ahtisaari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, to define a status that will promote development and progress for all the people of Kosovo and strengthen stability in the region as a whole.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/906) and his Special Representative, Mr. Rücker, for his excellent briefing. I also welcome the presence of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic, President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and thank her for addressing the Council.

The question of Kosovo has now reached a crucial stage. We have noted that, since the beginning of this year, with the joint efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, some progress has been made in implementing the standards. However, challenges remain in areas such as security guarantees, the return of refugees and ethnic harmony.

Given the situation on the ground in Kosovo, we believe that there can be hope for Kosovo's future only if the momentum for standards implementation is maintained and a breakthrough is achieved in establishing a harmonious and multi-ethnic society. We hope that the Provisional Institutions and their leaders will, with UNMIK's assistance, overcome the current difficulties and implement the standards in a comprehensive and effective manner. The other parties concerned should also provide positive cooperation.

The future status process for Kosovo has been under way for nearly a year. With the assistance of Mr. Ahtisaari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, the Serbian Government and the Kosovo authorities

have engaged in contacts and carried out dialogues and negotiations at various levels and in various places. While some progress has been made, the parties continue to hold opposing positions. Despite the great difficulties facing this endeavour, China believes that it is extremely important and that the efforts should continue. That will help to push the future status process in the right direction.

China is concerned about the individual incidents of violence that have occurred recently in Kosovo. We hope that both sides will exercise restraint and continue their dialogue in a flexible, pragmatic and constructive spirit in order to find a mutually acceptable solution.

We have also noted that Special Envoy Ahtisaari has indicated that he will submit a conclusive report early next year. We hope that his recommendations will play a constructive role in resolving the question of Kosovo's future status.

The question of Kosovo is sensitive and complicated; it has a direct bearing on peace and stability in the Balkans and the neighbouring regions. Whether the question of Kosovo can be appropriately resolved is a source of concern to all. In resolving the question of Kosovo, we need to listen to the views of all parties, especially those of neighbouring countries. We must be mindful of the possible impact that the modalities of a settlement could have on neighbouring regions. Any settlement must lead to a lasting resolution of the question of Kosovo; it must not create new turmoil or have a negative impact on the stability of other regions.

China has always abided by the principle in international law that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected.

The international community and the Security Council should be impartial on the question of the future status of Kosovo and encourage both sides to seek a mutually acceptable plan through constructive negotiations on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I would like to be brief. I have 10 points, so please forgive me if they come across rather bluntly.

First, I would like to welcome Special Representative Rücker, Prime Minister Çeku and Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic. They are very welcome in the Council.

Secondly, the United Kingdom condemns, unreservedly, the violence in Kosovo and elsewhere in the region. The perpetrators — be they Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Serb or of another ethnicity — must be brought to justice. But I would caution against concluding from this that the Kosovo authorities themselves are guilty of that violence.

All sides should refrain from violence and respect the rule of law and the Contact Group Guiding Principles, which have been endorsed by the Council. If violence happens once status is settled, there will be consequences for Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Thirdly, it is clear from the contributions of the Special Representative and members of the Council that there has been progress on standards implementation, and that is extremely welcome. The Kosovo authorities and Mr. Rücker deserve our thanks and our support for making further progress.

Fourthly, standards do not end with status settlement. They are part of the integral framework for European Union and NATO integration. Should there be a breakdown post-settlement, there will be consequences for that integration.

Fifthly, with regard to participation, it is disappointing that, once again, members of the Council are having to call on Belgrade to allow Kosovo Serbs to take part constructively in negotiations about their own future. Belgrade is not protecting the Kosovo Serbs by not letting them participate. What it is protecting is its own hard line, and members of the Council have said today that they do not find that acceptable. We have called on Serbia several times to encourage the Kosovo Serbs to engage. It is extremely disappointing that once again they continue to defy the Council in this matter.

Sixthly, I would like to say that the United Kingdom considers itself a friend of Serbia. We want to help Serbia to integrate into Euro-Atlantic institutions. We have recently joined with our NATO colleagues and allies in welcoming Serbia and other countries in the region into Partnership for Peace. It is disappointing that the hand of friendship extended by NATO and by countries like my own in bringing Serbia into Partnership for Peace is not matched by a reciprocal willingness on the part of Serbia to assume its rightful place in Europe and to engage in good-neighbourly relations.

If I may, Mr. President, I would like to refer to the letter sent to you today by Prime Minister Çeku of Kosovo, in which he says, "We do not seek to avoid Serbia, we seek to meet them as neighbours in a stable and mature partnership". We call on Serbia to reciprocate that. It is important to have a Europe that is whole and free. We cannot do that without Serbia, but, equally, we are not responsible for Serbia's isolation, which is being imposed by Belgrade.

As my seventh point, I very much welcome what Ms. Raskovic-Ivic said about the rule of the law governing Serbia's actions. That is extremely welcome, but it needs to be put into practice. In particular, we call on Belgrade to transfer Mladic and Karadzic to the Hague Tribunal. Those two men are responsible, and have been indicted, for the massacre at Srebrenica of 7,000 Muslim men and boys. We also call on Belgrade to stop encouraging the separatists in Republika Srpska and to stop interfering in Bosnia's internal affairs. The Dayton Peace Agreement has established what Bosnia is: a State with two entities, one of which is Republika Srpska. There is no read across — nor will we let there be any read across — between the settlement of Kosovo's status and that of other countries in the region, including Bosnia.

A number of speakers today have raised the issue of status. The important thing is that the Council must back our Special Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, whose appointment by the Secretary-General we endorsed. Ms. Raskovic-Ivic mentioned the Serbian Constitution and the Serbian platform. We respect the right of the Serb people to express their views. But in terms of the settlement of Kosovo's status, the Serb platform and the Serb Constitution are sideshows. The only show in town is the Ahtisaari status process and the Contact Group's January and July statements, with which the United Nations, the EU, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as members of the Contact Group, have associated themselves. That is a substantive and substantial body of States Members of the United Nations. It is an important set of documents. We look to Belgrade to stop its campaign of vilification of Mr. Ahtisaari. It achieves nothing and only diminishes Serbia in the eyes of the United Nations and its Member States.

My next point is to note that we have taken this long to settle Kosovo's status out of a wish to be able to bring Belgrade along. But I think it is becoming increasingly clear that Belgrade does not wish to engage with us and does not wish to engage with the Status Envoy in settling the status. That is a pity, as many members of the Council have said today. We would far prefer a negotiated solution. But the Contact Group has also laid down an alternative route, if that is not possible.

Finally, on the nature of the status settlement itself, it is not for me or anyone in the United Kingdom to say what the status should be. As I have said, that is for Mr. Ahtisaari to do. At the same time, I think that we should all recognize that there is a growing consensus on the part of many observers that any settlement is likely to be based on some form of independence for Kosovo, supervised by a robust international civilian and military presence and with cast-iron guarantees protecting the rights and security of Kosovo's minority communities. Such an outcome would be consistent with the Contact Group Guiding Principles and Contact Group ministerial statements, echoed by many in the Council today, regarding a settlement that is acceptable to the majority of people in Kosovo. It is difficult to identify any sustainable alternative options that provide a better basis for developing Kosovo's democratic future and wide regional stability. And, of course, any settlement must enshrine the standards that we have discussed today — standards on which the international community rightly remains focused, and which form the bedrock of any country's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): I, like others, would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Rücker, for his useful briefing. I would also like to thank the President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, for her statement, and the Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo, Mr. Çeku, for his presence.

I associate myself with the statement to be delivered shortly by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

We are pleased to note that the Provisional Institutions have made significant efforts to improve standards implementation since the previous report. Denmark would like to welcome the commitment to move forward shown by the Administration in Pristina,

especially on the 13 priority points identified by the Contact Group. However, there are a number of areas where further attention is needed, not least with regard to the rule of law and freedom of movement. Violence — whether or not ethnically motivated — undermines reconciliation and threatens progress, and we condemn the recent spate of violent incidents.

We welcome the concrete steps taken by the Provisional Institutions to improve conditions for Kosovo's minorities. However, it is also clear that these steps do not automatically improve relations between the majority and the minorities. The leadership of the Provisional Institutions needs to create confidence among all of Kosovo's ethnic groups. That can be achieved only by reaching out and by showing a genuine willingness to compromise.

We are very concerned about the steps taken by the Kosovo Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo to end contacts with the Provisional Institutions and set up parallel structures. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, by remaining outside the political process in Kosovo, the Kosovo Serb leaders are doing a disservice to their community. We thus urge Belgrade to encourage the Kosovo Serb representatives to participate constructively in the Provisional Institutions in Pristina, not least in the municipal bodies.

We all hope for a sustainable solution to Kosovo's future. Non-cooperation, isolation and entrenched positions will not lead to a better future. Flexibility and compromise are prerequisites for a sustainable solution, and coordinated and forward-looking actions on the part of all actors will be required. The primary beneficiaries will be all Kosovars, regardless of ethnicity; the population of the Republic of Serbia; and, indeed, all the peoples of the western Balkans. Cooperation and participation is in everyone's best interest.

In that context, we would like to reiterate our full support for the Status Envoy, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari. We welcome his intention to present proposals for a comprehensive status settlement to the parties after the parliamentary elections in Serbia.

In our view, dragging out the process of resolving the Kosovo status issue will not benefit regional stability. The solution should meet the aspirations of the majority of Kosovars and, at the same time, include adequate minority protection and guarantees.

Denmark views the situation in Kosovo from a regional perspective. We steadfastly support UNMIK and KFOR. We look forward to the more peaceful and prosperous future which the peoples of the region deserve. That will entail close regional cooperation towards the common integration of these truly European countries into the Euro-Atlantic structures, where they rightfully belong. However, the Euro-Atlantic perspective depends on the implementation of standards and a sustainable solution to Kosovo's future status.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Qatar.

I should like to welcome Mr. Rücker, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo, and to thank him for briefing the Council. We commend him and all members of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for their efforts. I wish also to welcome Ms. Raskovic-Ivic.

The crisis in Kosovo has been going on for far too long, as has the suffering of the peoples of that territory. It is time to resolve that crisis and to find a solution to all the problems resulting therefrom. It is encouraging to witness the significant efforts that have been made so far to that end. The United Nations has played a central role in those efforts alongside other parties.

Those efforts have begun to bear fruit. State institutions in Kosovo have started to take shape and are managing the territory's affairs and serving its people in an efficient and stable manner. However, the territory continues to require a great deal of support from the international community and the United Nations in order to strengthen its institutions and ensure stability and development.

Achieving long-term stability, however, will require settling the status of the territory. In that regard, the positions of both parties are still largely at odds. But it is encouraging to see that dialogue is continuing, which has helped to resolve numerous technical, constitutional, legal and other issues.

One of the conditions for finding a permanent settlement concerning the future of Kosovo involves ensuring the effective participation by Kosovo Albanians and Serbs in the Government and in all State

and social activities, which, in turn, should be based on a recognition of a multi-ethnic society. All segments of society must take part in the dialogue on the future status of the territory, as that would endow it with legitimacy and sustainability. Both parties should encourage such participation and refrain from any act that would hinder or undermine it.

The efforts made to achieve progress and implement the special standards for Kosovo and the 13 priority areas identified and submitted by the Contact Group to the Kosovo Government are promising, but those steps should be completed in order to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The level of return of refugees remains unacceptably low, due to the economic situation, which is still in need of improvement. The international community must support that process. However, a more important reason for the low number of returnees is the uncertainty and ambiguity that prevail with respect to the future status of Kosovo.

In closing, we commend the role of UNMIK, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Contact Group for their efforts to strengthen stability, promote development and determine the future status of the territory of Kosovo.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway members of the European Economic Area and Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Joachim Rücker, for his clear presentation. I would like once again to underline the European Union's continued support for the Special Representative, Mr. Rücker, in his efforts to implement resolution 1244 (1999) and to prepare for the transition between UNMIK and the future international presence in Kosovo once the status of Kosovo has been determined.

As the Secretary-General notes, the status negotiations and initial preparations for the end of UNMIK's mandate and for the transition period have indeed characterized the past months. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari has since the beginning of this year actively pursued engagement with both Belgrade and Pristina through direct talks and expert consultations in such key areas as community rights, decentralization, the protection of cultural and religious heritage, as well as the economy.

Regarding the future status of Kosovo, Belgrade and Pristina have, unfortunately, continued to express diametrically opposed positions. As the Secretary-General remarks in paragraph 2 of his report, these talks have enabled the two sides "to engage in a substantial exchange of views ... without resulting, however, in any major shifts of position".

The EU continues to encourage both Belgrade and Pristina to engage constructively in the status process. However, the process should not be open-ended, and neither party should unilaterally block or derail the process, for example, by resorting to violence.

We fully share the view of the Secretary-General, who noted with dismay that violent attacks continue to be made by a few in an attempt to effect political change. He also observed that the political process cannot be dictated by the streets and that violence will not be tolerated.

The EU continues to fully support the United Nations Special Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari, and his conduct of the political process to determine Kosovo's future status. We welcome his intention to present a proposal for a comprehensive status settlement to the parties after the parliamentary elections in Serbia that will be held on 21 January.

We share the Secretary-General's view of generally positive developments in Kosovo. In its annual progress reports for the Western Balkan countries, and also for Kosovo, the Commission of the European Union welcomes the progress in Kosovo in the transfer of responsibilities to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. At the same time, we stress the crucial importance of further accelerated and

effective implementation of the standards, which are equally essential for Kosovo's European perspective.

More efforts are needed to create an administrative environment that will ensure further approximation of European standards. We also stress the need for further efforts for full respect of the rule of law and independence of the judicial system. The issues of combating organized crime and corruption, macroeconomic stability and the protection of all communities living in Kosovo also need the special attention of the Kosovo authorities.

The future status settlement will be a challenging task, not only for Serbia and Kosovo, but also for the whole international community. It will require coordinated and forward-looking action from all actors involved. However, the status settlement alone will not solve Kosovo's pressing economic and social problems. Those challenges will remain and will need to tackled with new vigour.

The future status settlement should safeguard a future for all the citizens of Kosovo in a multi-ethnic and democratic society and be conducive to economic and social development.

The Western Balkan region, including Kosovo, has been given a European perspective. The EU has a major interest in a positive and clear outcome of the status process. Its success will be essential, not only for providing a clear perspective for the people in Kosovo, but also for the overall stability of the region. In this context, maintaining the European perspective of Serbia is of great importance. Also, we would like to make it clear that we see the question of Kosovo's status as sui generis. The outcome of the status process will not set a precedent for other regions because its current status is exceptional, being based on Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

We regret the fact that the Kosovo Serbs still do not participate in the work of the central institutions in Kosovo, despite the international community's repeated calls for them to do so. We once again urge Belgrade to encourage Serbs in Kosovo to engage in the work of the Kosovo institutions, where they can most effectively advocate their own interests. It is crucial to understand and to ensure that all communities have a place in Kosovo, regardless of its future status.

The EU continues its support for the Kosovo institutions in their efforts to implement the reform agenda. The EU is firmly committed to supporting Kosovo's political and economic development, and we are preparing our future presence in Kosovo with other international actors. It is essential that UNMIK stays with full powers until that future presence is established. Well-coordinated action among various international organizations and assistance from other donors are vital to ensure effective implementation of the status settlement and the sustainable development of Kosovo. The EU will assume its role in that regard.

A long-term commitment of the donor community will be indispensable to ensure a stable and secure Kosovo for all its citizens. A strong post-status international presence would also be needed to support the Kosovo institutions so as to ensure security and stability, as well as to safeguard the multi-ethnic character of the new Kosovo.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): Allow me to welcome you, Sir, as Security Council President for the month of December.

I also welcome the presence of the President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, Ms. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic, and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, His Excellency Mr. Agim Çeku, in this Chamber.

I would like to join my colleagues in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/906) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Joachim Rücker, for his informative briefing.

I shall confine myself to several points of crucial importance, as seen from the perspective of Ukraine. The Secretary-General's report highlights certain progress in the implementation of standards, now aligned with the European Partnership Action Plan. While welcoming these positive developments, we believe that, as a critical prerequisite for Kosovo's long-term unity and stability, the work needs to be further continued and intensified.

The province's leadership should make particular efforts to ensure that Kosovo remains multi-ethnic and democratic in nature, with respect for civil liberties and

the rights of national and religious minorities. Further attention is needed to solve the problems of government decentralization and the protection of minorities' cultural and inheritance rights. It is also of paramount importance that the Kosovo government reaches out to the Serb population and makes them partners in the ongoing transformation, and that Belgrade encourages such endeavours.

The Secretary-General report underlines the increasing tension in Kosovo as the negotiations on the future status move forward. We are disturbed by the fact that ethnically and politically motivated crimes continued during the reporting period, some of which being obvious attempts to pressure the international actors. We therefore fully share the clear message in the Secretary-General's report that political developments and timelines will not be dictated by the streets and violence will not be tolerated.

As an active contributor to international and regional peace and security, Ukraine will continue to participate in the peaceful efforts of the international community in Kosovo. We favour the conclusion of a mutually acceptable compromise decision between Belgrade and Pristina, under active international mediation and in full compliance with relevant Security Council decisions, including resolution 1244 (1999).

Ukraine strongly believes in the need to attain a final settlement of the political, economic and security situation in Kosovo through the creation of adequate conditions for the return of the non-Albanian population and through the guarantee of human rights, including those of all ethnic groups.

My country cautions against any hasty or unilateral steps that could destabilize the situation in the region. We believe that current negotiations need to be prolonged based on the recognized norms and principles of international law. It is with particular concern that we perceive declarations about the so-called universal nature or precedence of a Kosovo settlement. Such approaches may pose the risk that some countries, particularly in international organizations, could use their influence in the future to advance analogous scenarios in other regions with frozen conflicts, above all within the post-Soviet space.

The international magnitude of the Kosovo issue, as well as the unstable situation in the region, certainly require a continued civil and security presence of the international community on the ground. At the same time, Ukraine considers one possibility — the European Union decision on the international mandate over the territory of Kosovo for a certain period time — to be a transitional measure.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Mr. Neritani (Albania): Let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Joachim Rücker, for presenting a clear picture of the reality on the ground in Kosovo. His continued steadfastness at the helm of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), at this very critical stage as one chapter comes to a close, has established a proven record of keeping all stakeholders engaged in the necessary transition to the forthcoming stage.

The Albanian Government will continue to support efforts towards the goal of a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo. I take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his hard work and commitment to finding a solution to this matter. We also thank UNMIK, the Kosovo Force, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union for their continuing dedication and commitment in Kosovo. The latter's ongoing resolve is an extremely important contribution to the smooth and harmoniously coordinated transition that will shape the basics of the post-status period.

I would also like to welcome the presence of Prime Minister Çeku in the Security Council. We congratulate him on the commitment he has shown throughout this year to the implementation of standards, and especially to the 13 priority points identified by the Contact Group, as the UNMIK report explicitly states. The implementation of the programmes, by reaching out to all the people of Kosovo, has strengthened Kosovo's institutions and helped build a future foundation for the hard work ahead. We are confident that the established institutions and those to come will continue to offer effective governance in building a viable, multi-ethnic and prosperous Kosovo for all its citizens.

I also welcome the presence of Ms. Raskovic-Ivic as the representative of the Serbian delegation.

I thank the Secretary-General for his latest report and express my delegation's appreciation for that realistic and substantive document.

We are pleased with the overall assessment that further progress and significant achievements continue to be the dominant rationale in Kosovo. The successful implementation of standards; the institutional ability to understand and to advance progress by reaching out to all the people of Kosovo; the improvement of services delivered; and a clear orientation towards democratic principles and values are some of the elements underlined in the report. It is to be welcomed and encouraged that the standards programme has been incorporated into and become an integral part of the European Partnership Action Plan and that the Government has already created structures and concrete plans to implement it. This clearly reflects the fact that, even at this critical stage, Kosovo is pursuing the chosen path of institution-building and minority accommodation.

It is also to be emphasized that the security situation has not been adversely affected by the ongoing future status process. We share the view that this situation must not be taken for granted over an unrealistically extended period of time and that it has to be adapted accordingly as the evolving situation on the ground in Kosovo dictates.

Keeping pace with the current political momentum requires bold and determined action by all parties and actors involved in the process. Further backsliding after the important deadline of January 2007 may seriously jeopardize an orderly Kosovo settlement and exhaust many bonds that have to date kept the process a promising one in a good cause. We are pleased that the need to deliver results sooner rather than latter is commonly understood and widely accepted by the Council and key Member States. Their unity and level of certainty is an indispensable element in delivering a result that will be acceptable to the people of Kosovo.

We share the view explicitly stated in the report that it is equally essential that Kosovo Serb leaders participate fully in the political process in Kosovo. Remaining outside of the process is a disservice to their community. As the report so clearly states, Belgrade authorities should respond to the coherent policy of the international community by removing all impediments to Kosovo Serb participation in Kosovo institutions. Now is the right time to solve the issue and not to try raising the stakes at the negotiating table.

At the same time, we appeal to the Kosovo Albanians to redouble their efforts to ensure the freedom and rights of minorities and to increase their outreach to all communities. We hold the view that Albanians and Serbs alike in Kosovo should leave their past behind, engage in reconciliation, strengthen their cooperation and look to their common future.

The Albanian Government continues to support the substantive dialogue between the representatives of the Albanians and the Serbs and calls upon both sides to exhibit a realistic understanding. The dialogue has started and will have to produce a result based upon the reality on the ground in Kosovo. An understandable exhaustion does not have to keep the necessary outcome in limbo indefinitely. We are pleased with the moderate progress on technical issues.

The political process to determine Kosovo's final status has objectively and by definition entered its final stage. The success or lack thereof towards an orderly political settlement will greatly depend on the continued constructive approach of all parties and actors involved. Albania will continue to play an active role and offer a constructive approach. We continue to hold the view that the status process should proceed steadily and swiftly. Further delay or any artificial status quo would prolong instability, uncertainty and institutional paralysis and serve nobody's interest, in or out of region.

We continue to share the international support for President Ahtisaari and his team. We reiterate our strong support for the Contact Group's guiding principles that there should be no change of borders, no partition of Kosovo, and no union with any other country or part of any other country.

We support a realistic solution acceptable to the people of Kosovo, fully grounded in the current reality of that specific case. The solution should be clearly defined in its political and legal aspects, and without any ambiguity; otherwise, it would tend to undermine the orderly process of reaching an acceptable status and rehabilitation thereafter. The outcome should contribute to ending the unpredictability and uncertainty that stem from the current lack of status, and strengthen the stability and security of Kosovo and the entire region.

We stress our strong conviction that the most realistic, pragmatic and just solution to this matter is independence, with a supportive continuation of the

civil and security presence of the international community. In other words, it must include the promotion and protection of Serbs' and all other minorities' rights and their cultural and religious heritage, and build a society in which all the people of Kosovo can live in dignity and prosperity and without fear.

We are encouraged that the Kosovo leadership, civil society, media, other relevant institutions and the broader community are demonstrating political and social cohesion, growing unity and cooperation with the international community in sharing responsibilities for building such a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo, integrated into the Euro-Atlantic structures. We are confident that independence will generate and guarantee social and economic stability and security for Kosovo and the whole region, and help to establish a sustainable, multi-ethnic and democratic society there. It will pave the way for the European perspective. Albania shares the broader view that the international military and civilian presence in Kosovo, even after the determination of the final status, will be essential to the success of all those endeavours.

In conclusion, let me assure this body that the Albanian Government will continue to take a constructive approach by actively playing its helpful and moderating role in the region. We will continue to be a reliable partner in full support of Mr. Ahtisaari and his mission throughout the upcoming process and beyond.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The President of the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija has asked for the floor again. I now give the floor to Ms. Raskovic-Ivic.

Ms. Raskovic-Ivic (Serbia): I would like to thank everybody for the many constructive proposals and comments made during the discussion, which I understood as expressing strong support for the negotiating process. I would nevertheless like to make a few clarifications.

On several occasions during the debate, I heard reference to the argument regarding the uncertainty of Kosovo Albanians as a reason for haste. I think that the uncertainty argument is not a good one, because the status and the situation that prevailed in Kosovo and Metohija and in Serbia prior to 1999 will never again prevail. That is especially true in the light of the future European prospects for the entire South-Eastern Balkan region.

I would like to say a few words about the participation of Serbs in the Institutions. First of all, Serbs living in Kosovo and Metohija do not have confidence, because freedom of movement is not what it should be and because there are still many attacks on people as they move about and commute from place to place.

There is also another issue involved, because participation is a complex matter that is not solely about confidence or security. There is no mechanism to prevent out-voting. I must remind the Council that when the Return Coalition was actively participating it submitted 72 amendments. Only two were adopted, and 70 were rejected. Serbs from that Coalition therefore always had the feeling that they were just there for decoration. The participation of Serbs in Kosovo should be meaningful. That is why we need a mechanism to prevent out-voting. Such a mechanism would be the best way to carry out negotiations, especially in the working group on community rights.

Then, of course, representatives in Kosovo and Metohija from the Serbian list are legal but they are not legitimate. That is because, out of the 140,000 Serbs in Kosovo and the 250,000 in Serbia and Montenegro that have the right to vote in Kosovo, only 811 persons voted.

I would also like to refer to the contention that Kosovo is a sui generis case. From our point of view — and not only as Serbs, for there are others who share our feelings and views — the issue of Kosovo is, by its very essence, a matter of precedent, not a sui generis case.

With regard to the comments of Ms. Lintonen, I agree with and welcome many of the things she said. I also commit myself and the Coordination Centre of the Republic of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija to cooperate with the European Union on technical and all other matters.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Raskovic-Ivic for her comments.

I now give the floor to Mr. Rücker to reply to comments and questions that have been raised.

Mr. Rücker: I am very grateful for the understanding we have experienced in this round of

discussions on developments in Kosovo, as well as for the recognition regarding the progress that has been made in standards implementation, which I think is to the credit not only of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) but, in particular, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government.

With regard to the status process, I do not comment on the very substance of the status process. But it is, in my view, our mandate to point out to the Council the objective costs that are associated with the continued lack of clarity on status. I hope that was clear from my statement. In addition, it is our mandate to facilitate the transition period: we do indeed have a role with regard to the transition period, and we want to bring that process to an orderly conclusion.

Many representatives mentioned incidents of violence in Kosovo. Let me assure the Council that we not only condemn violence wherever and in whatever form it occurs in Kosovo, but we and our Institutions see to it that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

With regard to the figures mentioned in Ms. Raskovic-Ivic statement, they do not match our close monitoring of the situation. We would be happy to share the real figures on those incidents with Belgrade and with the Council. However, as I have said, every incident is one incident too many, and we do bring perpetrators to justice. I would be happy to go into detail as necessary.

With regard to the presentation made by my Serbian colleague, I do not want to go into detail about what was said about UNMIK going beyond its mandate. However, perhaps I could address just one point. UNMIK is certainly not seeking a State for Albanians in Kosovo; and certainly UNMIK is working for a democratic and, in any fashion, a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

Statements dwelled on some of the issues in standards implementation where further progress is needed. I fully agree that there needs to be further progress in a number of areas. But that progress depends in part upon status — for example, in the economy. How can an emerging economy like Kosovo's develop without access to international lending or to borrowing, which is not possible until there is a resolution of the status issue?

With regard to the question of returns, there also we depend on status, because there is uncertainty and we know that many potential returnees are waiting for a decision on status.

Other issues have also been mentioned, such as decentralization and protection of cultural heritage. People are aware that Martti Ahtisaari has been negotiating with the parties on how those problems should be addressed and how there could be good tangible solutions to them. With regard to the pilot municipalities for decentralization, for example, people are now waiting for the issuance of a status proposal by the Special Envoy.

Other progress in standards implementation clearly depends upon the participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Institutions, as well as upon their recognition of the Institutions. In that connection, I was very grateful that so many speakers stressed the need for Kosovo Serbs to actually take those steps. Only by participating in the Institutions will they be able to influence developments in Kosovo properly. It is very important that this takes place, and I would again appeal to Belgrade to make it happen. I think freedom of movement is not an impeding factor for that. Outvoting should also not be a decisive criterion. We urge Kosovo Serbs to come to the Institutions and to engage and to recognize the Institutions.

The situation would be better in many respects if that were really to happen. For example, it is very good that we now have movement toward payment to KEK for electricity, which represents considerable progress. Also, with regard to the telecommunication issue, it is very clear that those providers that Sanda Raskovic-Ivic has mentioned have no license in Kosovo and have not paid any taxes there. However, they are encouraged to participate in the current tender for a second license for mobile telephoning in Kosovo.

All in all, I think confidence-building and dialogue are key. I urge the Kosovo Serbs and the minorities in general to take the hand being extended by the PISG and their representatives. We will work hard with this Council and under the direction of the Secretary-General to come to a good conclusion of the still-open question of Kosovo.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Rücker for those clarifications.

There are no other speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.